

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
BLIND BEGGAR
Of Bednal = Green.

Young Monford Riding to the Wars, where He unhappily Lost his Sight



Licensed according to Order.

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The blind Begger of Bednal Green.



THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Blind Beggar of Bednal-Green, &c.

CHAP. I.

How Monford, the Beggar of Bednal-Green, went, accompanied with his Wife, to the Wars of France; and by what means he came to lose his Sight, and save his Life, and of his Return to England, &c.

IN former days, when the Role of *England*, eclipsed the Lill of *France*, and true *English* Valour made that Nation flourish amongst other brave Callants that went over to try their Fortune, *Monford* was one, a Person well descended, and being naturally inclin'd to War, and greedy of Fame, neither entreaty of Friends, nor the Marriage he had contracted with a kind and beautiful Woman, could alter his purpose; but taking his Wife *Margaret* with him, who, by no means, would be induced to stay behind; he with many hundreds more, crossed the Seas, and with the help of a prosperous Wind, arrived at *Callice*, Marched to the Royal Standard, accompanied with

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loving Wife, who in Man-like attire, became his inseparable Companion, in Danger and Hazards, and was the cause of saving his Life; for many Skirmishes happening between the *English* and *French*, wherein young *Monford* behaved himself with wondrous Courage, and in one, following too hot the pursuit, was with others, intrapped in an Ambush, late in the Evening, and though he manfully disputed it, making great Slaughter of the Enemy; yet in Spight of resistance, he was beaten from his Horse by a forcible Stroak, and left in the field for Dead, a



amongst the dead and dying Men; where he had undoubtedly perished through loss of Blood, and the anguish of his Wound, but not his tender-hearted Love, upon her hearing what had happened, and his not returning, hasted to the Field, where amongst the Slain, she (by Moon-light) discovered him, stripped, and struggling for Life; and by the Help of a Servant, brought him to a Shepard's Cottage, where she carefully dressed his Wounds, and

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and administered such Cordials as brought him to himself, to her unspeakable joy; though this joy was somewhat abated, when she found by the forcibleness of the Blow, he had lost his sight; But true Love working in her heart, the alteration, or disfigurement of his Countenance could not alter her Affection; but comforting him in the best she could (though indeed his natural Courage would not lightly admit of any dejection) she, with part of the money she had, procur'd him a homely suit of Apparel, and brought him (now unfit for service) back to England, of whose entertainment and settlement at Bednal Green, in the County of Middlesex, and course of Life, you shall hear in the following Chapter.

C H A P. I I.

How Monford arrived in England, and of the cold Entertainment he found among his Relations; how he came to Bednal-Green, and settled himself there, he continued to Beg for his Living, &c.

Monford escaping a Storm at Sea, in his return, landed with his vertuous Wife, on the Coast of Essex, where he had some considerable Relations, to whom, in this Necessity, they applied themselves for Succour; but they, either not desirous of his Company, who, after the Death of his Parents, had wasted much of his Patrimony, or fearing in that Condition he might be Chargeable to them, would not know him; and those that were convinced he was the same Monford, that went over into France, gave him but cold entertainment, insomuch, that scorning to relye up n their Charity, he told the kind Partner of his joy and sorrow, that he intended (early in the Morning) to halt towards London, and that he would rather trust to Providence,

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vidence, than to the ingratitude of those, who in his prosperous days had caressed him in a high manner. His Wife cherished him, declaring she would not be Idle at home, but Labour at her Spinning Wheel; and at such other matters as in her youth



ger Years she had been brought up to: And so without taking leave of any, early in the morning they departed; and in two days travelling (having spent the little money they had reserved) necessity, that has no Law, so far humbled his high Spirit, that he did not think it amiss (especially in places where he was unknown) to crave the Charity of the People as he passed through several good Towns, who understanding that he came by his misfortune in fighting for the Honour of his Country, gave

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liberally, insomuch, that he resolved to be of good Cheer; and thereupon considering with himself, that he was never brought up to Labour; or if he had, the loss of his Sight had render'd him incapable of business, he resolved to embrace what Providence had cast in his way; which was, to live upon Charity, which he found to flow in upon him faster than he expected: Whereupon, arriving at *Bednal-Green*, a place near *London*, he, with the little money he had got, hired a small Cottage for his Wife and himself, and daily appearing publick to crave Alms, was from thence called, *The Beggar of Bednal-Green*, and in a short time found it a thriving Trade, insomuch, that his Bed of Straw was changed into Down, and his earthen Platters, and other Utensils into a better sort.

C H A P. III.

How Monford happened to meet with Snap, an Old experienced beggar, who gave him an insight into the mystery of the Canting Tribe, and how he invited him to their general Rendezvous, &c.

Monford resolving in this kind of way to spend the remainder of his days, that he might humble himself for his former Offences, having plyed it with good success in the place where he lived; by the Road side he was encountered one day by an old Proficient at the Trade, who seeing him diligent, became greatly desirous of his acquaintance, and to know what Gang he belonged to, and began to Cant (as is usual amongst such seasoned Sticks of that Profession) of which kind of Speech being known to none but themselves. Monford being ignorant, could make him no direct Answer; which the other, whose Name was Snap, perceiving, and thereby knowing him to be a young beginner, invited him to their Feasts, or Rendezvous in *Whire-Chappel*, whither he having promised to come; and they between them, tipp'd off four black Pots of *Ham*; they at that time parted.

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C H A P. I V.

How Monford went to the beggars Feast; and of his Entertainment; as also of the Present they made him, &c.

Monford, upon his coming home, declared to his Wife, what a merry Companion he met with; and what Discourse he had, as likewise what he had promised, entreating her to get things in readiness, that she might be at leisure to Conduct him thither, where appeared, instead of a ragged Regiment of *Lame, blind, and dumb*, ther was a rout of jovial Dancers, as gay as the Spring, and as merry as the Maids; which made them imagin they were either mistaken in the Place, or had been imposed upon; and ther



fore were about to retire, had not Snap, who knew Monford at the first blush, started from his Chair, where he sat Supervisor in all his Gallantry, and taking him by the Hand, let him know who he

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he was, and afterward presented him to the whole Assembly, who received him as a Brother, or Member of their Society, each (by the Order of *Snap*) paying him a Complement: And that for the future he might not want a Guide on all occasions, *Snap* (in the name of the rest) presented him with a Dog and a Bell, trained to the Business, and had before been the Companion of an Eye-



less Beggar deceased; and so having feasted him and his Spouse in a splendid manner, they dismissed him, upon his promise that he would not be wanting at that yearly meeting; and being dismissed, he trudged home with his tractable Guide, which ever after proved servicable to him.

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C H A P. V.

What Success he had in his Begging Trade, and how a Daughter was born to him, and Christened by the Name of Elizabeth.

THe blind Beggar by these fortunate Adventures, being in a manner Master of his Trade, scorned to be confined to his former plying places, but, by the help of his Dog, trudged often to *London*; and having the perfect Tone, had (for the most part) the luck to return with his Pockets well lined with Chink, and by long practice, his way of begging became so pleasing to him, that he would often profess it the happiest part of his Life, and thus Tune his Pipes upon occasion.

His S O N G.

A Beggar lives a merry Life, he hath both wealth and ease,
His Days are free from Care and Strife, he does what e'er he please:
Whilst others labour, sweat, and toil, his Tongue doth get him Pelf,
He travels with his Dog and bell, and brings home store of Wealth.

He being by this time in a warm condition, to add further to his Joy, and make him amends for his loss of Sight, his loving and careful Wife fell in Labour, and brought forth the loveliest Girl imaginable, whose Birth made him quite forget his former misfortunes, and think himself the happiest Man alive; an hundred times he kissed her, and dandled her in his Arms, and at her Christening (which was managed with Decency and Prudence) caused her to be named *Elizabeth*, from whence she was afterward deservedly called pretty *Betty*; for as she grew up, she exceeded in Beauty to a degree of Wonder, her courteous and seemly Behaviour no less obliging; so that in her very Child-hood, some began

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began to dote upon her admirable Perfections, and the better to qualifie her, gave her such Learning as was suitable to her degree, which she improved to the height; so that her Beauty and Wit; her Skill in Singing, Dancing, and Playing on Instruments of Musick, procured her the Envy of the Virgins therabout; who supposing themselves much Superiour in *Birth* and *Fortune*, could ill endure to hear her Praises every where spoken of, especially by the young Men, whilst they stood neglected; inso-much, that not knowing other ways how to vent their spleen, they would often take an occasion openly to Affront her in the Street, and at Merry-making, calling her *Beggars-brat*, (and uttering many other unseemly Speeches) which she bore as long as she could endure, with a becoming Patience, and strove, by gentle Perswasions and Reproofs, to win them to a Reconcilement; and often with Tears in her lovely Eyes, she would be apt to say to them: *You should not methinks Envy me at this*



Fate, who never injured you; but strive to do you all the Good Offices I can: What if my Parents are (as you suppose them) Mean, and you were Queens, and I not so well Descended as you selves, though

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though in that you may be mistaken; it might have been your Case had Heaven seen fit, and had it been so, Tell me which of you would not have been Afflicted to have been used as you unkindlie use me?

These, or the like Expressions being uttered in vain, and many ways being contrived by her ill-willers to discourage those Suitors that sought her Love; she being by this time Fifteen Years of Age: wherefore, to end the Strife, and in hopes to be kindly used amongst Strangers; she resolved to make it her Request to her Parents, that she might take her Lot in search of Fortune; the which she did with Tears in her Eyes, telling them the Cause; but they long time opposed it, using many Arguments to perswade her to the contrary: But finding the Reasons she urged weighty, and tending to her Advantage, they left it to her Discretion.

C H A P. VI.

How the Blind Beggar's Daughter left her Father's House, to seek her Fortune; the Reason why she did it; and the Entertainment she found.

THe day being come that pritty *Betty*, the Blind Beggar's daughter should depart, being furnished with Cloaths, Money, and other Necessaries, she fell upon her *Knees*, and craved her Parents blessing; which being given, with many Prayers for her Prosperity, they took a sad farewell, and each betook them, *viz.* *Monford* to his Mumping Trade, his Wife to her Wheel, and the Daughter to seek her Fortune.

Pritty *Betty* having left her Father's House, or rather Smoak-Loft, went pensive along the Road towards *Stratford*, as one not resolved whither to go, but rather trusting Fortune, and her Good Angel, to direct her; and so travelling all Night, by
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the light of the Moon, by Sun-rise she came to Rumsford in Essex, where finding her self *faint*, she betook her self to an Inn, and there sitting down, called for some-what wherewith to *Refresh* her, looking *pensive* and *sad*, and often sighing at her hard *fortune*; which the *Mistress* of the House *perceiving*, as also her neat Garb, and modest Behaviour, began to question her from whence she was, or whither she was bound? who told her she was one that had been well *Educated* by indulgent *Parents*; but was now, contrary to her former expectation, forced to *seek* her *fortune*; and that she was born near *London*. Upon this, the good Woman being *more* and *more* taken with her



Carriage, *demand*ed if she would be content to stay with her, till she could *better* provide to *her* *advantage*, and that she would use her as a *daughter*, rather than a *servant*; to this (after a while,

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while, having weighed, and considered it) she consented, and in the performance of whatever she undertook, discharged her self so well, that she gained the love and applausse of all that observed her, insomuch, that her Name, for beauty and ingenuity began to spread, and abundance of young men resorted to the House, which treated a great trade, on purpose to see her, who generally took a liking to her; for Nature had made her so lovely and charming, that she could not but be admired; insomuch, that many of them (as they found opportunity) began to buz Love Stories in her Ears, to which she gave but little heed, till four Suitors of greater worth beat off these little Assailants, and laid a Close Siege; as in the following Chapter will appear.

C H A P. VII.

How pretty Betty, the blind Beggar's Daughter, living at an Inn at Rumford, was courted by divers Persons of good birth and fortune, &c.

IT being by this time secretly whispered, That pretty Betty must be more than she seemed, as to her Parentage, it made her Reputation grow higher; insomuch, that the Inn keepers Son; a London Merchant; a Gentleman of a good Estate; and a rich Knight, courted her favour; against whose importunities she urged the meanness of her Birth, and inequality of fortune; entreating them (if they were in jest, as she could not otherwise imagine) to spare the blushes of an innocent Maid, or if in earnest, to consider how much, who ever of them had her, would impair himself by so unequal a Match, and place his Affections elsewhere, lest he not meeting (wth her) his expectation, his Love, after Marriage, should decay, and turn to Reproach; which (she said) would break her poor Heart. This modest objection possessed

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felless them with farther thoughts of her concealing the worth of her birth and Parentage, and gave more Fuel to their Passion: So easie is Man to believe the Thing he would have; insomuch, that they began to renew their protestations of Love, and intirest Affection, offering her Rings, Gloves, and Jewels; but she would



The young Knight
that Married pritty Betty.

not accept them, lest the taking the Gift without the Man might be predudicial to her Fame; for all of them she well knew she could not have, or whether any of them, when they came to know that her Father was a beggar, would have her, she could not well believe; though they severally promised to love her as dear as life, and maintain her in the height of Gallantry, whose Addresses her Master and Mistress suffered for the sake of their profit; yet she growing conscious of the injury she might do them, by hindring their fortunes, made a resolution to discover her Parents, and that way try the sincerity of their Affections; and accordingly did it.

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C H A P. VIII.

How pretty Betty being Wooed by her Master's Son, a Merchant, a Gentleman, and a Knight, upon her declaring her Parentage, was slighted by all but the Knight, and of the Agreement she made.

OUR beautiful Virgin being hardly pressed for Love and Enjoyment, found her self obliged to take a *course* that might rid her of her Lovers, or Allot one of them to her share; wherefore she told them she was not really at her own disposal, her parents being alive, therefore if they loved her as they said, and seeing but one could Enjoy her, she was contented her Father should choose one for her, of whose Choice she would Approve.

This let them in a manner at Daggers drawing who should get thither first; but whither to go they knew not; therefore desired to be informed, every ones Heart being filled with Joy, not doubting to carry the prize; when thus she began:

My Parents Worthy Sirs, live on Bednal-Green, my Father is led with a Dog and a Bell, living upon the Charity of good People; and my Mother a poor Woman that Spins for bread; and these are my Parents, therefore I will not be induced by any means to Marrie without their Consent.

This struck our Gallants for a while as mute as a Mouse in a Cheese, after which they made difficulty to believe it, saying, it could not be, that such home spun Creatures could be the Parents of so beautiful a Maid, but she insisting on it, and giving them an account of the leaving them, and the reason, they began to scratch their Noddles, and stamp on the ground, drawing in their Horns faster than they had put them out, the Merchant, the Gentleman, and the Inn-Keepers Son, swearing if so it was no Wife for them, for they would not be Nosed with

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one of a Beggars degree, and so they troop'd off. But the young Knight who was inflamed with Love, and having a great Estate, stood not upon Interest so much, as pleasing his Fancy; after he had paused a while, took the *Blushing Maid* by the Hand, and



said, You see my Dearest, how those that Courted you, in hopes you were a Great Fortune, are vanished now they find their mistake: Say, will you yield to one more constant, who truly Loves you for your beauty and good Parts, and you shall be without delay, sole Mistress of him, and all that is his.

To which she answered with a Sigh, Alas! Sir, I dare not expect so great a Happiness, or if I durst, I would not dispose of my self even to you, who (though blushing) I must confess I ever esteemed above the rest, without consent of my Parents, for though they are Poor, yet they are my Parents still.

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This modestly kindled his Passion more and more, wherefore after much discourse, and many vows of Constancy, it was agreed that he should be ready with a Horse and Servants the next Morning early, and that she would come to him, that they might Ride to Bednal-Green, to require the Old Man's Consent; yet this was not carried on so secretly, but Spies being abroad, discovered it, not only to the Knight's Uncle, who managed his Estate, but to most of the Young men of Rumford, who were her Admirers.

C H A P. IX.

How Pretty Betty Rid behind the Knight to her Father's House, and what befell by the way, as also when she arrived there, how her Father dropped Angel's witq the Knight's Uncle that opposed the Match.

O UR Beautiful Virgin meeting her Courteous Knight at the time and place appointed, relying upon his Fidelity, made no scruple to use his Servants help in setting her behind him; but scarcely were they out of the Town, but the Knight's Uncle coming to the Inn, finding neither of them there, suspected what had been told him to be true; and thereupon he followed to prevent the Match, as also did divers Young Men who were deeply in Love with her, to Rescue her from the Knight, whom they supposed had carried her away by force.

So that great was the Hurry and Confusion, and the Townsmen taking the nearer way, got before him e'er he arrived at Bednal-Green, and fell upon him without giving him leave to speak for

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for himself, or suffering his Mistress to excuse it; so that *there* began a sharp Conflict, till such time as divers Persons that *were*



Travelling the Road came in and parted them, whereby they came to a right understanding; which made those that had misused him beg his Pardon, which he granted, and dismissing them kept on his way, till coming to the Old Man's Door they alighted; which made him upon the hearing of Horses trample (being a thing very unusual) start from the Fire, and put his Head out of his Window, and not understanding the meaning of it, e'er the Knight's Uncle came puffing and blowing at a strange rate; crying, *Why how now Nephew? what's this I hear of you? are you mad to disgrace your Family by marrying a Beggar's brat? for shame, for shame, consider better than to make your self a laughing-stock to the World, by such an unseemly Match: Pray how came this about, you baggage you?* But however, I say Nephew, leave her, and

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and I will provide you a Fortune, Rich and suitable to your Condition.

To this the Young Knight would have Replyed, but the Beggar growing Cholerick to hear his Daughter so used, interrupted him.

I cannot (says the Old Man) see you at all, but Sir, (whatever you are) I hear you too much, and more than becomes a Civil Gentleman; nor do I count my Girl so mean, to suffer her to be Railed on at my own Door; therefore, pray Sir, hold your prating, or I shall feel for you with my Staff: I have known the day, when a Taller Fellow than you durst not have put me in a Passion: If your Kinsman does not think my Child a fit Match for him, let her alone, and welcome; but I think in beauty and good breeding she is not wanting, and as for money, be it known to you, her Father is ready to drop Angels with you for his Girl, if you have any of Your own: Do Ye mark me there?

This smart Speech put the Gentleman to a Nonplus for a while; but coming to milder terms, the dropping Business was Concluded on.

And the Gentleman immediately sending his Servant, to fetch what Gold he had, whilst the Beggar from under a heap of Rags, and old hooes, pull'd out a Cats Skin or two stuffed with Gold, whereby it appeared his Trade had been advantageous: and each Party being ready, they Rained a Golden Shower so plentifully, that the Gentleman's Sock failed him, and the Beggar not hearing it Chink, fell into a Laughter, and said, How now Sir, is Your Money done soon? I thought at first You had more Words than Money; pray for your Credits sake, try your Friends, for I have three or four us Skins with Golden Puddings in their bellies yet. Indeed said the Gentleman, I am content to own you have out-done me, I think you have the Philosopher's Stone, or keep a Familiar, to bring it you from the Golden Mountains: but seeing the World goes well with you, I shall no further go about to persuade my Nephew

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phew from being your Son-in-Law, but beg Pardon for what I have done. O do you so? (said the Beggar) then things may be better perhaps than you expect: When turning to the Knight, Gather up, said he, the loose Corns I have scattered, and here's a Cats Skin to make that up Three Thousand Pounds, besides a Hundred more to buy her a Gown, take this as her present Portion, and as you behave your self, expect more hereafter: Remember I give her you, and with her my Blessing: Go to Church and be Married a God's



Name. Upon which, the Knight and his fair Mistress falling on their Knees, gave him twenty Thanks, and departed; whilst those that had been Suitors, hearing what had happened, were ready to hang themselves for madness.

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C H A P. X.

How pretty Betty was Married to the Knight, and her true Pedigree discovered; together, with the Festival and Joy that ensued.

THINGS being come to this pass, great preparations were made for the Wedding; to which resorted many worthy Personages, no cost being spared, either in Rich Apparel, or Sumptuous Fare, whilst the lovely Bride was led to Church by her Worthy Bridegroom, Feasting the Eyes of the Beholders with her Beauty; and when the sacred Bands were ty'd, they return'd, with the like Splendour, to the place of Feasting excellently becoming and Gracing what they wore, as if Nature had made her the most exact pattern of Beauty: Being arrived, and the Table spread, the Bride, now of a Beggar's



Daughter made a Lady, took her place, out-shining other Beautys that were there, as far as the Moon is out-shone by the Sun: And now nothing but the Old Beggar and his Wife was wanting, when they soon came, Richly dressed in Silk and Velvet

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Velvet Embroidered with Gold, so that all things went on in Joy and Merriment, and great was the satisfaction the Company received in their Repast; but more in the Musick, Dancing, Masquerading, and the like; while the Old Man had prepared to Celebrate the happy Nuptials, and in the end, craving Attention, he Sung this

S O N G.

*You Gallants all that here are come,
to make this day more happy prove,
Know, though I'm Blind, I am not Dumb,
but wish you Happiness and Love:
The Bride, though her Birth seem but mean,
descend'd of a Worthy Race;
Her Ancestors they great have been,
if you her Pedigree do Trace.*

*Know, she is Monford's Daughter Fair,
who lost his Sight i'th Wars of France;
Who ever since in Begging here;
did take his Happy Thriving chance:
Consider, Bridegroom, then her Birth,
whom some do think but Mean and Low,
As much of Honour can bring forth,
as you have Power to show.*

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The Name of *Monford* which had been held so Famous for Vertue and Valour in those Days, did not a little cause Wonder in the Hearers, who desiring him to explain himself; he plainly told them his Adventures in *France* and *England*, and how he took up the Trade of begging, and the like; which caused a general Joy, since all that had formerly known him by that Name, supposed him to be dead, and the *Bridegroom* was pronounced now more happy than ever. So his *Lovely Bride*, whose *Birth* and *Fortune* equalled his in all Degrees; and old *Monford* promising, for the Credit of his Daughter, to leave off the *Begging Trade*, and live upon what he had got, the Day was Concluded, to the Joy and Satisfaction of all Partys.

F I N I S.

